THE ICC AND THE ENVIRONMENT: Going Above and Beyond

[continued from page one]

"BUILDING GREEN"

The same environmental commitment will steer the actual construction of the highway. For example, tens of miles of silt fence – a heavy canvas-like material that prevents loose soil from running off into streams during rainstorms – will encircle many construction areas. Extra effort will be required by contractors to reduce emissions from construction equipment. A team of full-time, on-site, highly-qualified environmental inspectors will be vigilant in ensuring that construction activities do not adversely affect the surrounding environment and that all permit requirements are followed.

Reflective of this "above and beyond" approach is the ICC's Independent Environmental Monitor, who reports not to the ICC project team or SHA at large but to a number of environmental regulatory agencies. Should permit violations or other problems be observed, the Independent Environmental Monitor would report them to agencies that exist to protect the environment, not build highways.

Protecting the environment is a first-order priority of the ICC project. Every activity is assessed through the prism of its potential impact on the environment. This ethic of enlightened environmental stewardship will guide the project until its completion.

SILT FENCE ENCIRCLES CONSTRUCTION AREAS, PREVENTING LOOSE SOIL FROM RUNNING OFF INTO STREAMS.

INTERCOUNTY CONNECTOR ICC

Maryland State Highway Administration
707 N. Calvert St., C-102
Baltimore, MD 21202
(866) 462-0020 (toll free)
www.iccproject.com

Standard Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Owings Mills, MD
Permit No. 167

INTERCOUNTY CONNECTOR ICC

THE CONNECTOR

Winter 2006

A newsletter designed to inform, assist, and engage the public during design and construction of the Intercounty Connector

THE ICC AND THE ENVIRONMENT: Going Above and Beyond

Protecting the diverse and sensitive natural environment that will be traversed by the Intercounty Connector (ICC) requires extraordinary focus and effort. That is why the ICC's $370 million environmental program – more than 15 percent of the project's estimated cost – is both unprecedented in scope and cutting edge in approach.

Symbolizing the ICC project's commitment to the environment are initiatives that go beyond merely meeting requirements to actually correcting certain environmental problems – unrelated to the highway – that otherwise would remain unaddressed. These include 63 environmental stewardship projects that will address environmental stresses caused by past development in the area.

AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION AND MITIGATION

In planning the highway, the State Highway Administration (SHA) went to great lengths to create a comprehensive set of avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures to protect the environment to the utmost extent. For example, many ICC bridges over parks and streams will be longer than normal to lessen the amount of environmental impact in these sensitive areas and to allow greater clearance for wildlife and vegetation. And, in many cases, the path of the ICC roadway will be lowered into the ground near existing communities to reduce noise and visual impacts.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The ICC project's environmental mitigation and stewardship efforts will yield benefits in the project area and beyond. Examples include:

- Nearly 74,000 linear feet of stream restoration in Northwest Branch, Indian Creek and the Paint Branch and Upper Paint Branch watersheds.
- 1,500 linear feet of fish passage work, which will remove or bridge blockages, thus enabling fish to reach prime upstream spawning areas.
- More than 83 acres of new wetlands at seven major sites. The restoration of wetlands adjacent to Northwest Branch was completed this fall (see photo on back page).
- Approximately 4,300 acres of water quality and stormwater management improvements, including state-of-the-art stormwater controls and 16 stormwater-management sites, in each of the major watersheds.
- 21 projects, totaling 620 acres, aimed at improving water quality, protecting brown trout and other environmental conditions in the Upper Paint Branch watershed.
- 44 bridges and culverts (in addition to the bridges at major stream crossings) to provide safe passage for deer and small mammals.
- More than 700 acres of reforested land to create new forest habitat.
- Over 775 acres of new parkland to mitigate the approximately 88 acres that will be used for the ICC. One park project is complete: a new soccer field for the Wheaton Boys and Girls Club has replaced a field that was prone to flooding (see photo below).
- An extensive program of landscaping, retaining walls and sound barriers to make the ICC less noticeable, helping it fit better within the fabric of adjacent communities.
- More than 11 miles of bike trails – a centerpiece of the extensive community and cultural resource program, which also includes historic property preservation.

[continued on back page]

BEFORE AND **AFTER** THE CREATION OF A SOCCER FIELD FOR THE WHEATON BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB.

CRITICAL INVESTIGATION: Examining Underlying Soil Conditions

Just as one wouldn't build a house on shifting sands, ensuring the ICC will be built on a solid foundation is a first order of business. Since spring 2005, crews have been thoroughly investigating soil conditions along the 18.8-mile corridor and will continue doing so through spring 2007.

Engineers need to develop a firm understanding of the specific types of soil, rock and the location of groundwater to determine subsurface strength conditions prior to construction. Soil conditions help determine how the road is designed; weak soils can dictate that a stretch of highway be elevated, or that the soil itself be reinforced.

Traditionally, geotechnical investigations employ a tall drilling rig using hollow bits (augurs) to drill to the desired depth to collect soil samples. However, drilling rigs can be extremely large, heavy and loud.

In several locations, the ICC project turned to new generation drilling rigs to lessen environmental and community impacts while also expediting the process. These lower-profile drilling rigs are quieter than traditional rigs and are remote controlled, further reducing the intrusion of work. Track-mounted drill rigs can navigate a variety of terrain where standard drill rigs are unable to pass, including soft ground and steep slopes.

Along with the track-mounted rigs, the project team is using geophysics (the science of detecting and mapping underground features utilizing hand-held electronic equipment), thereby reducing the amount of intrusive digging or drilling.

Using techniques that are sensitive to both the community and the environment, the ICC project team is steadily gaining a strong understanding of the strength of the soil upon which the ICC will be built.

COMMUNITY FRIENDLY LOW-PROFILE RIG WORKING WITHIN THE ICC PROJECT CORRIDOR.

WORKERS USE A STANDARD DRILL RIG TO INVESTIGATE SOIL CONDITIONS.

LET'S TALK

CONTACT US AT **866-462-0020** OR AT **ICCPROJECT@SHA.STATE.MD.US** IF YOU HAVE **QUESTIONS** OR WOULD LIKE TO **SCHEDULE A COMMUNITY MEETING**.

NEW PROJECT PHASE, NEW WEB SITE

With design and construction of the Intercounty Connector gearing up, a new project web site recently debuted that describes the new phase of the project. A wealth of information is only a mouse-click away at **www.iccproject.com**.

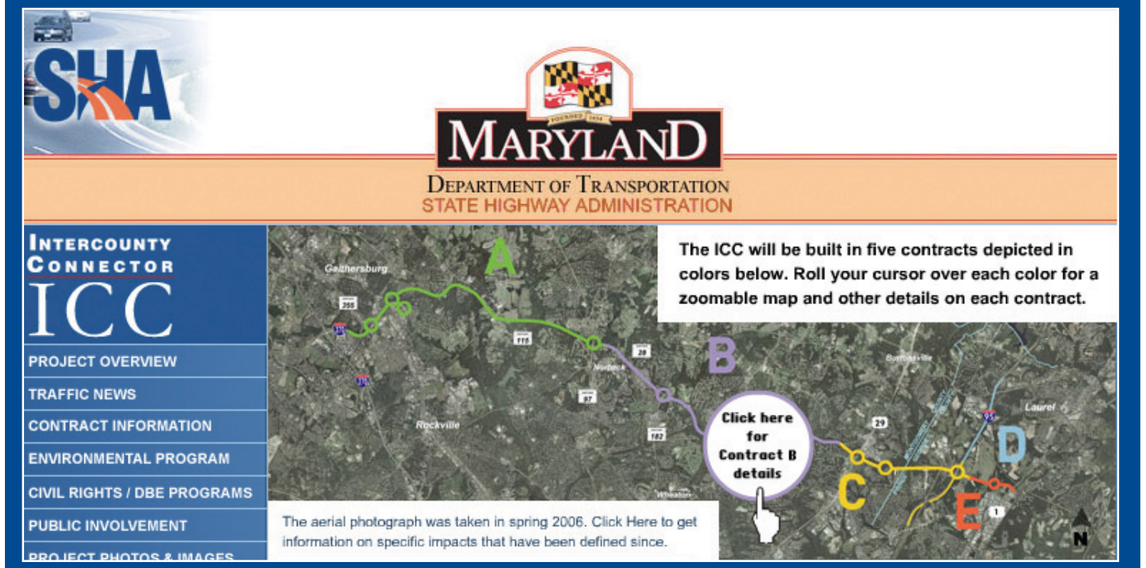
The web site features current project news, construction progress, environmental efforts, specific contract information, civil rights/disadvantaged business enterprise programs (DBE) and public involvement initiatives. The site is intended to serve as the comprehensive and official source for up-to-date project information for the community, public officials, media, contractors and others.

A centerpiece of the site is the homepage "zoomable" map, which is an aerial photograph onto which the ICC has been drawn. Five different colored lines represent the geographic "footprints" of the five main ICC contracts. The zoom function allows site visitors to get views as detailed as individual houses or as broad as the entire 18.8-mile project corridor.

When site visitors roll their cursor over the map, each contract is profiled. By clicking on a specific contract area, they will see an enlarged section of each contract area, which they can zoom in or out as they like. Detailed information for each contract – text, photos, computer drawings and maps – describes affected communities, community and environmental enhancements, travel benefits and a construction timeline. This information is tailored to each contract so residents and travelers in local communities can develop a strong understanding of how the ICC will affect them.

Keeping the local residents and traveling community abreast of the most current information is one of the ICC team's top priorities. The web site will help ensure all interested parties can access project information and provide their input.

Although sections of the site are still under construction, the project team invites your feedback. Please complete a short survey at **www.iccproject.com/survey**.



VISITORS CAN ROLL THEIR CURSOR OVER THE HOMEPAGE MAP FOR DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE FIVE ICC SEGMENTS.